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# HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

## LYON COUNTY, IOWA,

AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE

### COUNTRY AND ITS RESOURCES;

GIVING INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO THE INDUCEMENTS  
WHICH IT OFFERS TO IMMIGRANTS AND OTHERS  
DESIRING TO SETTLE IN THE NORTHWEST.

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*"Homes, Fortunes, Health and Happiness for all."*

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PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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BY S. C. HYDE.

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SIoux CITY, IOWA:

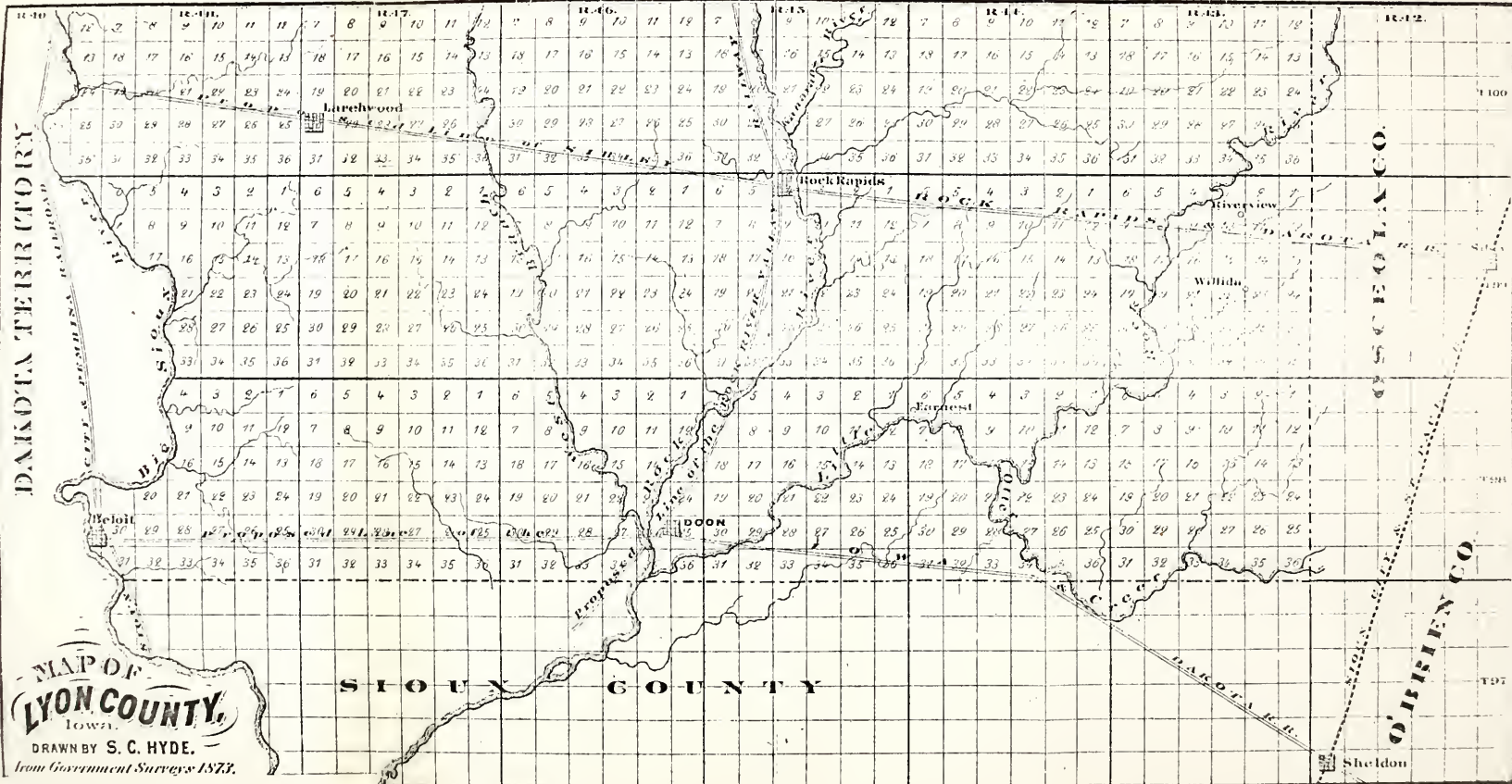
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1873.





# MINNESOTA.





# OFFICIAL DIRECTORY

FOR 1872. 1758080

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COUNTY TREASURER,

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CHAS. H. JOHNSON.... *Earnest, Lyon County, Iowa*

H. T. HELGERSON..... *Beloit, Lyon County, Iowa*

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FOR 1873.

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COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,

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F. W. ALLEN..... *Willida, Lyon County, Iowa*



## PREFACE.

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The citizens of Lyon County have long felt that its beauty and natural resources were little known. They have also felt that the growth and development of the county and the interests of immigrants and capitalists seeking locations in the West, might be promoted by adopting some means for making known the character of the country. It has also been thought that some effort should be made to preserve the memory of the early settlers of the county, who have perilled their lives in the wilderness and endured great hardships and privations to lay the foundations of the county, and to make some record of events in its early history, which would otherwise pass into oblivion when this day and generation have gone.

Accordingly, the Board of Supervisors of Lyon County ordered the publication of a pamphlet, to be devoted to these objects. One of the early settlers of the county, who is well acquainted with the country, was appointed to write the pamphlet, and the following pages are the result of that action.

The writer is indebted to Dr. John K. Cook, of Sioux City, Iowa, and Hon. Charles Negus, of Fairfield, Iowa, for valuable information concerning the early history. The report of Dr. C. A. White, State Geologist, and the sketch of Iowa by Hon. A. R. Fulton, Secretary Iowa Board of Immigration, have also greatly assisted in the preparation of this pamphlet. The aim has been to give a brief sketch of the early history of the county. Also, to give a truthful description of the country, and such a statement of facts as will give to all who may desire to seek new homes in the



West, a correct idea of the superior inducements which our young county offers.

That these objects may be attained, and many induced to settle within our borders and share the advantages and blessings which await all who will make homes among us, is the earnest desire of

THE WRITER.





# LYON COUNTY, IOWA.

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Lyon County, forming the northwest corner of the State of Iowa, is bounded on the north by the State of Minnesota, west by the Big Sioux River, which separates it from Dakota Territory; on the south by Sioux County, and by Osceola on the east. These limits embrace a beautiful region of country, extending 37 miles in length east and west, and about 17 miles in width, containing about 575 square miles, or 368,000 acres. The altitude of this county is about 1,400 feet above sea level, and it lies east of the middle of the United States.

## EARLY HISTORY.

Prior to the year 1851, the territory embraced within the present limits of Lyon county had never been designated by any particular name. And the vast region of country comprising Northwestern Iowa was almost entirely unknown.

The General Assembly of Iowa, by act approved January 15, 1851, created the county of Buncombe, comprising what is now Lyon County. The following circumstances gave rise to this singular name:

The Legislature which convened in 1851 was composed of a large majority favoring stringent corporation laws, and the liability of individual stockholders for corporate debts. This sentiment in the Legislature, on account of the agitation of railroad enterprises, then beginning brought a large number of prominent men to the capital. To have an effect on the General Assembly, they organized a lobby legislature, in which these questions were ably discussed. They elected as Governor, Verplank Van Antwerp, who delivered to this self-constituted body a lengthy message, in which he sharply criticised the regular Legislature. Some of the members of the latter body were in the habit of making long and useless speeches, much to the hindrance of business. To these he especially referred, charging them with speaking for buncombe, and recommended that as their lasting memorial, a county should



be called Buncombe. This suggestion was readily seized upon by the regular Legislature, and the county of Buncombe was created with few dissenting votes.

By act of the General Assembly, approved January 12th, 1853, Buncombe County, with several others, was attached to the county of Wabkaw, for judicial and revenue purposes. The same Assembly, by act approved January 12th, provided for the organization of Wabkaw, which had been created in 1851, and by another act, approved at the same date, changed the name of Wabkaw to that of Woodbury.

Buncombe remained under the jurisdiction of Woodbury County, until its organization, January 1st, 1872.

By act of the General Assembly, approved September 11th, 1862, the name of Buncombe was changed to Lyon. This was in honor of the gallant General Nathaniel Lyon, who fell at the battle of Wilson's Creek, while leading the First Iowa Infantry in a charge.

### THE INDIANS.

Both history and the earliest traditions agree that the Sioux, one of the most powerful and warlike of the Indian nations of America, have from time immemorial been the sovereigns of Northwestern Iowa, and a vast region to the north and west.

At the time of the creation of Buncombe County (now Lyon), in 1851, the title to the soil still vested in the Indians.

On the 23rd of July, 1851, a treaty was concluded with the Sioux, by which they relinquished to the United States all their lands in Iowa.

The Yanktons and Tetons, tribes of the Sioux, formerly inhabited the region watered by the Big Sioux and Rock rivers and their tributaries, comprising what is now Lyon County. These were the most savage and warlike of any of the great Sioux nation, and maintained an almost constant warfare against the Iowas, Omahas and Ottoes, powerful rivals, who lived to the south.

Here in our beautiful county of Lyon has been the home and the favorite hunting ground of the Yanktons for ages. Depending principally upon the chase for sustenance, the countless herds of buffalo, elk, antelope and deer, which constantly roamed over these prairies, rendered this region especially attracting to the Sioux. These they hunted on horseback, using the bow and arrow. And the



countless numbers of these animals which they annually slaughtered may be inferred from the heaps of bones and skulls which still lie about their old camping grounds. They specially delighted in the meandering valleys of the Sioux and Rock rivers. The timber skirting these streams supplied them with fuel, shelter, and ash for making their bows and arrows, and constructing their *tippees*.

The Sioux have left many evidences of a long occupation of this country. Prominent among these are their burial places. One situated on a high table land, on the west bank of Rock river, overlooking the town of Doon, bears evidence of great age. This consists of many series of circular mounds, each about fifteen feet high. They are encased at the summit in stone, and contain the bones of their dead. But the most remarkable of all their relics are situated on a plateau extending back from the east bank of the Big Sioux river, on the south side of a small creek in Township 100, range 49.

These works are of the most singular character, and bear evidence of great labor and ancient origin. The surface of the earth appears to have been removed to a considerable depth, from a large field being thrown up into pyramids or mounds from fifteen to twenty-five feet high. Of these, there are a great number covering over twenty acres. Some of these works assume the form of an amphitheatre composed of circular terraces rising one above another from the ground. In other places circles have been formed of huge blocks of Sioux quartzite rock. Ornaments of copper, vessels of pottery, pipes and pieces of curious workmanship, cut out of the famous pipe-stone, have been found upon these grounds. Not having the appearance of works of defense, habitation, or burial places, they must have been devoted to athletic feats, public games, and religious exercises.

On the north bank of the creek are the remains of long lines of redoubts and breastworks, having the appearance of an old fortification. Their village, or camping-ground, was situated a short distance to the southward.

These have been the loved and consecrated grounds of the Yanktons from time immemorial. Here, in one common family, these children of nature met to worship the Great Spirit. And here they bade farewell to their happy hunting-grounds, and departed forever.



## EARLY SETTLEMENT.

Although the Indians relinquished all claim to their lands in Iowa in 1851, and stipulated to remove at once to their reservation on the Upper Missouri, they were loth to leave their favorite hunting grounds, and did not take their final departure until 1869. Some lingered around their old council fires, and others returned on frequent hunting excursions.

With the exception of a few families at Sioux City, no settlement had yet been made in Northwestern Iowa, and the country was little known except to Indian traders, hunters and explorers, for many years. In 1854, Dr. John K. Cook began the Government surveys, and the same year laid out the town of Sioux City. In 1855 the United States Land Office was opened at Sioux City, and on the 11th of September of the same year, Alexander Anderson, United States Deputy Surveyor, completed the field surveys for the south tier of townships in Lyon County.

The remainder of the surveys were completed the two following years by different United States deputy surveyors.

The abundance of game and fur-bearing animals soon brought several parties of hunters to the Rock and Sioux rivers, who were joint occupants, with the Sioux, of Lyon County for several years.

An account, if possible, of the adventures and hair-breadth escapes of these hardy men would form an interesting chapter in the history of Lyon County. Among the most noted of these adventurers was Daniel McLaren. "Uncle Dan" had his cabin at the mouth of a sparkling creek, which now bears his name, on the east bank of the Sioux. He was fortunate enough to keep his scalp from falling into possession of the Yanktons, and always had his storehouse well filled with buffalo, elk, deer and beaver skins. After the county began to settle, he concluded to take a homestead, and there are many now in Lyon County who have enjoyed his hospitalities. But Uncle Dan soon became restless, so he "went West" to find "elbow room."

"Old Tom" long had his cabin at the mouth of Tom Creek, near the present town of Rock Rapids. But with the advantage of the implements of the whites, and his great skill as a hunter, he could take more beaver than the Sioux. So they shot him through the heart with an arrow, one morning, while setting his traps.]





But the tale which most excites our sympathy is that of three young men from Massachusetts—Roy McGregor, George Clark and Thomas Lockhart. As they were possessed of education, talent, and noble ambition, the tragic fate of two of this company is sad indeed. It must have been in the summer of 1862 that this party resolved to spend the winter in a hunting tour in this part of the West. Reaching the Rock river valley in October, and being elated with the prospect here for a successful winter's hunt, they built a cabin on an island in the river, at the forks of the Little Rock, West Branch and Rock river. Here they passed the autumn in rare sport, taking an abundance of game. But their happiness was not to continue long unbroken. One morning, after snow had covered the ground, while McGregor and Lockhart were attending to their beaver traps, a short distance above the "Lone Cottonwood," on the bank of the Little Rock, opposite the present residence of Jessie Monk, they saw a drove of elk bounding down the valley. Seizing their rifles and firing simultaneously, they brought down a large buck. They were preparing to carry the venison to camp, when they were suddenly attacked by a band of Santee Sioux from Minnesota, who had been following the elk. The Indians first fired upon them with bows and arrows, from which McGregor received a shot in the side, and then charged upon them with unearthly yells. McGregor and Lockhart returned the fire from their rifles, and then retreated a short distance down the river under cover of the overhanging bluffs on the south bank of the stream. Here the superiority of their breech loaders, and the advantage of their position, enabled them to keep the Indians at bay. As soon as possible, Lockhart extracted the arrow from poor McGregor's wound, and inquired if he was much hurt. He answered briskly, "Oh no," but soon began sinking and died in a few hours. When night came on, Lockhart escaped under cover of darkness and the thick underbrush, and joined Clark at their camp. They feared to move for several days, but finally returned to the scene of their encounter with the Indians, but could find no traces of poor McGregor.

Notwithstanding the shock produced by the loss of their companion, Lockhart and Clark decided to remain and contest with the savages the right to hunt on these



grounds. They were not, however, molested again, and continued their hunting with great success until spring. Their cabin was fitted up with much taste, being lined on the inside with wolf skins, and became a favorite resort for hunters throughout this region. The two companions had barely recovered from the gloom caused by the death of McGregor when another calamity befel them more crushing, if possible, than his tragical death.

The island upon which the cabin stood was very low; but as the river was also low at the time of building it, they had no thought of a flood. Early in March the weather became warm, the snow melted, and as the river began to rise, Lockhart and Clark felt some uneasiness lest the water should come into their cabin. A heavy rain came on, and the river continued to rise, until as they had prepared to retire, one evening, they found the water up to within a few inches of the door. Yet they concluded to wait until morning before making preparations to move.

During the night the ice broke up, and with the floating timber gorged the river above the head of the island, almost completely damming it. Behind this gorge the water continued to rise until it had covered the river bottom to great depth. Lockhart and Clark had arisen and begun to prepare their breakfast when this gorge broke, and the flood came down upon the island and cabin with terrific force. Hearing the rushing of the water and breaking of the timber, they ran out of the cabin just as the water came down upon them. Lockhart seized hold of a tree and succeeded in climbing out of the way of the flood. Clark jumped into the river and swam for the east bank. He succeeded in crossing the stream, and grasping some overhanging boughs, turned his head and exclaimed: "Tom, I'm all right," when the flood came upon him, and, overwhelmed in the torrent, he sank to rise no more.

Lockhart remained in the tree for several hours, when, by means of some floating logs, he reached the high bank and made his escape.

Gladly do we turn from the early footprints of white men in Lyon county, and relating these wild scenes, to record the first step made in its settlement.

To Lewis P. Hyde belongs the honor of making the first settlement in Lyon County, who, on the 23d of July, 1866, entered, as a homestead, lots 1 and 2, section 19 and



lot 5, section 20, township 28, range 48, lying on the Sioux river, about two miles above what is now Beloit. Mr. Hyde formerly resided in Wisconsin. Being surrounded by a family of grown up sons, he decided to emigrate to the great West, where each could secure that birthright of every American citizen—a good home. He first emigrated to Minnesota, where he remained some time, but was never satisfied until reaching the beautiful undulating prairie near the east line of Lyon county. From here to the Big Sioux river he was delighted with the country. Ascending the high table land overlooking the present town of Beloit, he beheld in the broad and magnificent valley of the Sioux future wealth, population and prosperity. He accordingly settled here, on the tract of land where he now resides, while his sons settled across the river in Dakota.

Mr. Hyde and his sons immediately set to work and erected the little cabin which formed the first dwelling in Lyon County. Little did they dream, as the sound of their axes broke the solitude never before disturbed by the husbandman, that so soon should they be surrounded by a prosperous community, and all the blessings of civilization.

Mr. Hyde is now being rewarded for the hardship which he endured in leaving an old settled country to become the pioneer of Lyon County. His homestead is one of the most valuable in the county, containing a fine body of black walnut, oak, ash, maple, and other timber; and his two sons own good farms near him, and are prosperous and happy.

During this summer (1866) the preliminary survey of the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad was made, and their land grant located. This was the beginning of an enterprise which is now doing good work in helping to build up Northwestern Iowa and Lyon County.

It was also during this summer that the first land-grant swindle was perpetrated upon Lyon County. This was done by the Des Moines Valley Railroad Company, under an indemnity land grant made by Congress. Through that grant this company secured 38,000 acres of the finest bottom lands in Lyon County, which would otherwise have passed into the hands of actual settlers, under the Homestead law, and the line of road which this company proposes to build for these lands does not run within eighty miles of Lyon County.



In the fall, Mr. Hyde and his sons returned to Minnesota to pass the winter, and make preparations to remove with their families to the county in the spring. And Lyon County was left to trappers, Indians and wild beasts, with no record of its history for the winter of 1866-7.

In the spring of 1867, this little band returned with their families to the scene of their former labor and commenced work. With Sioux City, seventy miles distant, for their nearest market, and the treacherous Sioux Indians to keep them company, their advantages for a successful summer's work must have been anything but good.

During this summer, Cerro Gordo County located a tract of 30,000 acres of beautiful land in Lyon County, as indemnity for swamp land due it from Government. That county afterward transferred these lands to the McGregor and Missouri River Railroad Company, who will probably run their line of road through them, giving us an Eastern market. This will partly compensate for their loss to actual settlement.

In the fall of 1867, Halvor Nelson, of Clayton County, who is justly regarded as one of the fathers of Lyon County, accompanied by his brother, Ole Nelson, started West to prospect for a location to engage in the mill business and build up a town. Mr. Nelson followed up the Big Sioux to where now stands the flourishing town of Beloit. Here he found a splendid water power, situated in one of the most extensive and fertile valleys in the West.

Regarding these as the sure foundation of a city, he proceeded at once to Sioux City and entered a large tract of land embracing what is now Beloit. He then returned to Clayton County, to prepare to bring out a colony of Norwegians in the spring.

During the winter of 1867-8, L. P. Hyde and family, and "Uncle Dan," who, during the summer, had taken a homestead at "Uncle Dan's Ford," were the only inhabitants of Lyon County, and we are able to glean little concerning the events or character of this winter.

Early in the spring of 1868, Mr. Nelson, with his colony, consisting of thirty wagons, took up their journey for Lyon County. The last hundred miles of their journey lay across an open prairie, without bridges, or even a trail to guide their course. The water being high, they encountered many difficulties in crossing streams and keeping their route.





Reaching Beloit, part of the colony settled in Dakota, and James Paulson, Chris. H. Sogn, A. K. Lee, Arne Helgerson, Gano Gunderson and Morton Hanson settled near Beloit, where, amid many difficulties, they began opening farms.

Mr. Nelson immediately commenced work on his saw-mill, and, although obliged to freight machinery and supplies from Sioux City, had it running before winter. A good quality of oak, black walnut, ash and cottonwood lumber was turned out, which greatly aided in the settlement of the Sioux Valley.

In the month of May of this season, H. D. Rice, then of Clay County, Iowa, encouraged by tales of the wonderful beauty of Lyon County, proceeded to explore the Rock river. Mr. Rice was much impressed with the extent and richness of this valley. But it was while standing on the highland above the now rising town of Doon that nature, in all its romantic beauty, seems to have burst upon his view. Before him, the broad and fertile valley of the Rock, with its sparkling waterfalls and groves of timber, wound away to the southwest until lost in the blue horizon of Dakota. The meandering Little Rock, its bright waters shimmering in the sunlight; the West Branch, with its delicate fringe of willow, and the green plateaus of these limitless prairies, lay, as yet untouched by the hand of civilization, before him. Who shall tell what were his feelings as he stood thus transfixed? Suffice for us to say, that he resolved here to build his permanent home. And from that time until the present, Mr. Rice has never lost faith in the ultimate prosperity of this country, and his voice and hand have ever been given in aiding the development of Lyon County.

In July, Mr. Rice, accompanied by L. F. Knight, reached the forks of the Rock a second time, where they built a cabin, and began the first settlement on Rock river. In August, Mr. Rice returned to Clay County for his family, leaving Mr. Knight alone at the forks of the Rock. This circumstance gave rise to the name of Doon, which this place now bears. Sitting in solitude on the bank of this beautiful stream, far removed from all humanity, with naught but the songs of the birds or the murmur of the waterfall to break the silence of the wild, Mr. Knight recalled those touching lines of Burns', beginning:



"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair;  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I sae weary, fu' o' care!"

Which suggested the name which he gave to this place, and which it will ever retain. In August, Emerick Erwin and H. W. Reves built a cabin near the forks, where they spent the following winter. Mrs. Rice reached Doon in September, and, moving into their little cabin, was the first white woman to settle on the Rock river. J. B. Hartson, of Wisconsin, arrived at Doon the latter part of December, and selected the tract of land where he now resides.

These persons and the little colony at Beliot comprised the population of Lyon County for the winter of 1868-9. This winter was very mild, with little snow. Mr. Rice turned his stock out on the river bottoms early in March, where they subsisted in good order without feed.

The various bands of Yankton Indians hunting through this region seem to have been peaceable, and although almost cut off from the world, these little settlements passed the winter in comparative comfort.

In May, 1869, Charles H. Johnson, of Wisconsin, one of the hard-working pioneers of Lyon County, explored the valley of the Little Rock river. Mr. Johnson was highly pleased with the great natural beauty and fertility of this valley. He accordingly selected a homestead at the junction of the Little Rock river and Otter Creek, and began the settlement of the Little Rock valley, now one of the best settled in Lyon County.

Soon after this, T. W. Johnson, A. A. Johnson, Emerick Irwin, and Messrs. McGuire, also settled near the forks of these streams, and the settlement of the Little Rock was fairly begun.

Prior to this, no settlement had been made in what is now Rock township, and the Rock River valley on the north part of the county had never been visited with a view to settlement. In the month of June, D. C. Whitehead, of Webster County, a live man, who has ever been foremost in the development of Lyon County, proceeded to explore the resources of this region. On his route he was joined by Matthias Sweesy and Delos Towseley. On the 22nd of June this party reached the rapids at the junction of the Rock and Kakananzi rivers, and here stood enchanted



by the sound of the waterfall, which for ages had wasted its power and lavished its beauty upon the wilderness. They were at once filled with enthusiasm and high hopes of the future greatness of the place. Mr. Whitehead here gave it the name of Rock Rapids, which will ever remain unchanged.

The party then selected homesteads, Mr. Whitehead nearly adjoining the present town-plat, and Messrs. Sweesy and Towsley a short distance above, and then left to return with their families. Thus was begun the now thriving town of Rock Rapids and the settlement of Rock Township.

In June, Geo. W. McQueen and John A. Wagner, of Lynn County, reached the county. Mr. McQueen entered several fine tracts of Government land, and settled permanently at Doon. Mr. Wagner selected a homestead on Burr Oak Creek, beginning the settlement on that stream.

In July, S. G. Martin and Justice Martin and family, settled a short distance above Rock Rapids, Mrs. Justice Martin being the first white woman to settle in Rock township, and they were the only family residing in that township during the winter of 1869-70.

While this progress was being made on the Rock, the Sioux valley was not at a stand-still. In July, Amos Severson, Thorsten Korsted, Ole Sorenson, Hans J. Olsen, Simon Tobiason, and others, settled on the Big Sioux in Township 99, and began what is now one of the most prosperous settlements in the county. And John Albertson started the settlement between Doon and Beloit. In November, E. W. Lewis, of Pennsylvania, selected a tract of land on the Big Sioux, in what is now the township of Larchwood, where he settled the following spring.

The colony at Beloit had received considerable additions to its numbers, and this season raised the first crop, of any importance, in the county, which was a good one. The dam at Nelson's mill, which had been carried off by the high water in the spring, was replaced, and Beloit wore a lively appearance.

During this summer, H. D. Rice built a large frame house on his place at Doon, which was the first frame building built at Doon, or on Rock river. A large share of the lumber for this building was hauled from Sioux City, seventy miles. But the protection which it afterward afforded settlers as they reached the county, amply repaid for the great labor in its construction.



During this summer, large tracts of Government land in Lyon county were entered by speculators, which is much to be regretted, as these lands would have soon passed into the hands of actual settlers, under the Homestead law.

In the fall of 1869, the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad was completed to LeMars. This brought markets and mail thirty miles nearer; but it can hardly be said that crossing a prairie forty miles in width, for a sack of flour or a letter, are "excellent facilities."

At the close of the year 1869, the population of Lyon County probably did not number more than a hundred souls. This may seem strange, as the first settlement in the county had been made three years before. But this region of country had as yet scarcely been heard of, and the few settlers who were there came almost by accident, or were brought in by the exertions of those who had settled first. The country, for a hundred miles to the east and south, was unsettled, and received the heavy immigration then passing westward, or it passed on to the extensively advertised regions to the south and west.

The winter of 1869-70 was mild, with the exception of two or three storms, which were of the severest kind. This and the preceding winter having been pleasant, these storms came unexpectedly, and in many cases caused extreme suffering. Some incidents of this kind are worthy of mention.

In January, S. G. Martin, with his daughter Lilly and son Clay, were crossing the prairie, from LeMars to Lyon County, with horses and wagon. While out on the open prairie, miles from the timber, a house, or shelter of any kind, they were overtaken by the terrible storm of that month. The snow, driven by a high wind, came so thick and with such force as to completely blind man or beast, making it impossible for them to keep their course or to proceed against the storm. The thermometer sank rapidly, the cold became extreme, and they seemed likely to all soon perish. With great presence of mind, Mr. Martin, assisted by his son, unloaded some sacks of flour and grain which he had with him, and stood them up in circular form, covering the top with blankets. He then unhitched the team and tied them to the wagon, and, with his son and daughter, crawled into the slight shelter they had so hastily prepared. Here they lay for two days and three nights, the





wind howling, the snow blowing through the crevices, and packing around them so closely that they were unable to move. Who can comprehend the anguish of that father, when, during the third night, after lying in that terrible situation for nearly sixty hours, without having tasted food and suffering unutterable anguish from the cold, his daughter exclaimed: "Father, I am freezing!" Happily they lived through the night, and the next morning, the storm having ceased, succeeded in making their way to Doon. Here they were kindly cared for in the family of H. D. Rice, where, although badly frozen, they finally recovered.

During the month of February of this winter, H. T. Helgersen selected a homestead at Beloit, where he now resides. C. H. Moon also selected a homestead adjoining the present town plat of Rock Rapids, where he settled the following spring, and D. C. Whitehead moved to Rock Rapids with his family, enduring great hardship and suffering from a terrible storm which came on at the time of their arrival.

The spring of 1870 opened with brighter prospects for Lyon County. The settlers put forth exertions to secure a share of the immigration of the season, and a much larger population was added than on any previous year. Large additions were made to the settlements in the west part of the county, and the good work of opening new farms was carried vigorously on.

Early in the spring, James H. Wagner, Wm. Wagner, Jas. I. Taylor and Robert Parks settled on Burr Oak creek, and J. S. Smith, Christian Larson, Isaac Kester, John Monlux, Abram J. Hamlin and Wm. Hamlin, near Rock Rapids.

While the settlement of the central and western part of the county was now fairly begun, the eastern part was entirely vacant. This is embraced within the limits of the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad, and the even numbered sections were held by the Government, for actual settlement only, at \$2.50 per acre, or homesteads of eighty acres each.

In June, S. C. Hyde, of Wisconsin, settled on Otter Creek, in the southeast corner of the county, making efforts to secure immigration for that region. The Soldiers' Homestead Act, approved in July, added a strong stimulus to the settlement of these lands. In July, Messrs. Schultz and others settled near the mouth of Otter creek. Later, John F. Thompson, Eli Baker, John Thompson and William Mead, with a number of families from their respective neighborhoods in Illinois and Wisconsin, made selections



farther east on Otter creek. In November, Jacob Hinshaw, Harmon Cook and Isaac Lawrence, made the first selections for the Quaker settlement on Otter creek, and the foundations for the settlement of the east part of the county were now laid.

In July, G. R. Badgerow, of Toronto, Ont., located at Doon, engaging in the real estate business, and buying several tracts of land on Rock river. In September, J. A. Carpenter and sons, of Beloit, Wisconsin, bought a half interest in Halvor Nelson's mill and real property on the Big Sioux. The name of Beloit was then given to the town, and the building of a first-class flooring mill begun.

Later in the fall, J. S. Howell, of Cherokee County, selected his present location at Rock Rapids, and became interested in that town.

During the summer of 1870, Lyon County shared with the whole West in a severe drought, lasting from the first of July until the close of the season. For a time the settlers were almost discouraged, yet where land was fairly under cultivation, crops were excellent.

In the fall, the citizens of Lyon petitioned the Board of Supervisors of Woodbury County for a county organization. This was refused, but a township organization granted, and two townships, Lyon and Rock, embracing the whole of Lyon County, were organized January 1st, 1871.

In September, the Federal census was taken in Lyon, giving a population of 221 persons, probably about the actual number.

On the 28th of May, 1871, was born the first child in Lyon County, Odena Lee, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. K. Lee, of Lyon township.

The first sermon preached in Lyon County was delivered by Rev. Ellef Oleson, of Dakota, on the 6th of September, 1870, at Mr. Nelson's residence in Beloit.

At the same time and place were married, by Mr. Oleson, Ole Torberson and Petrina Peterson, the first marriage in Lyon County.

As winter closed upon the inhabitants of Lyon, they were called upon to record the first death in the county, being that of Lyman A. Wagner, son of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Wagner, who died on the 26th of December, 1870, aged 4 years and 20 days. This event cast a gloom over the little community in Lyon, and reminded them that as with indi-



viduals, so it is with a community, a county, or a nation, no sooner do we begin to live than we begin to die.

The winter of 1870-1 was the most remarkable for its mildness of any within the memory of men in the west. There was not more than three inches of snow on the ground during the winter. Men worked out of doors in their shirt-sleeves, and stock could have wintered without shelter or feeding. A peculiarity of the weather was the prevalence of northwest winds, accompanied by warm, thawing weather, a feature peculiar to Northwestern Iowa.

During the latter part of the winter of 1870-1 the first school was taught in Lyon County by Mrs. D. C. Whitehead, at Rock Rapids.

With the opening of the spring of 1871, Northwestern Iowa received the largest immigration in its history, and Lyon County received its full share. This was greatly owing to the construction of the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad, then begun. Settlers crowded in and took the last of the vacant Government lands. One company from Appleton, Wisconsin, under the leadership of W. B. May and Anson Tolman, numbering twenty-five families, settled upon a fine body of land on the Little Rock river. This spring a mail route was opened from LeMars, via Doon and Rock Rapids, to Luverne, Minn., which event was hailed with joy by the inhabitants of this so long isolated region. During this spring a fine frame school building, the first in Lyon County, was built at Rock Rapids.

At Beloit, Messrs. Nelson and Carpenter erected several fine buildings, and continued the work on their flouring mill. Messrs. Goetz & Thorson engaged in the mercantile and real estate business, opening the first merchandizing establishment in Lyon County.

During the summer, J. W. Fell, of Bloomington, Ill., commenced improvements at the present town of Larchwood, which had been laid out in 1870, and planted over 100,000 fruit and forest trees on his lands adjoining the town.

On the 25th of July, at Rock Rapids, was commenced the publication of the *Rock Rapids Journal*, C. E. Bristol, editor. This was the first issue of a newspaper in Lyon County, and although the publishers were, for the time, obliged to procure their printing from outside the county, it performed a good work in making known the superior inducements which this region offered to immigration.



During the fall a large settlement was made throughout the county, especially in the eastern part, and by the beginning of the winter of 1871-2 the population of the county was probably one thousand.

On the 10th of October, 1871, was held the first election in the county. Ninety-seven votes were polled at this election, all of which were given for the Republican ticket.

On the 1st of January, Lyon severed its connection with Woodbury County, and was organized as an independent County, and the county officers elected at the preceding election, whose names are given elsewhere, entered upon the discharge of their duties.

Lyon County shared with the whole West in the extremely hard winter of 1871-2, and the record of that period would form a painful chapter in its history. A large share of the settlers had but just reached their claims, were unprepared for winter, and many of them were obliged to haul their fuel a long distance from the timber. In this condition winter set in upon them very early, was uncommonly cold, accompanied by severe storms, and caused much hardship and suffering.

With the spring of 1872 came the beginning of a new era in the history of Lyon County. A large amount of land was broken the year previous, the season has been an exceedingly fruitful one, and a bountiful harvest, with health and prosperity, has rewarded the pioneer for his toil. The Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad has been completed, opening up the great lumber markets of Minnesota and Wisconsin and the coal fields of Iowa. With the railroad have come the telegraph and the printing press, and noble men and women to build happy homes and people our lands. Capital has begun to join hands with the labor of the pioneer in developing our natural resources, and the sunshine of prosperity has beamed upon us. We are no longer contending with savages and wild beasts for the land we occupy. The blessings of art and science, the school and the church, society and fraternity, and all that contributes to the usefulness and happiness of man we now enjoy.

Thus have a band of hardy pioneers, enduring the perils and privations of frontier life, laid the foundations of Lyon County. They have organized society in the wilderness; first the cabin, the field, and then a neighborhood; then a school, a village, a church and a county.





They have erased the landmarks of the red man, and made the plow to take the place of the bow and arrow in obtaining a livelihood, and intelligence and humanity to supersede barbarism and war.

Standing at the front in an age of progress, through energy, endurance, and a strong faith in the future, they have paved the way and created a heritage of wealth, prosperity and happiness for those who are to come after them.

Happy that their perils, their hardships and sufferings have not been in vain.

"They crossed the prairies as of old the pilgrims crossed the sea  
To make West as they the East, the homestead of the free."

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## GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

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### SURFACE FEATURES.

Lyon County, as before stated, is about thirty-seven miles in length, east and west, by seventeen miles in breadth; and we doubt if anywhere in the United States may be found a mere fertile and beautiful region of country than is embraced within these limits. The surface of the country may be said to be smoothly undulating. There are no hills or stone to interfere with the most successful cultivation, and yet there is sufficient elevation and depression of surface to admit of perfect drainage. Nowhere is there to be found flat land or stagnant water, the whole country being gently rolling, or a succession of broad plateaus sloping to the southward.

By looking at the accompanying map, it will be seen that the country is well watered. These streams, unlike those in many portions of the West, are rapid, their waters clear and pure. The smaller ones meander through all parts of the county, furnishing excellent stock water, and giving a proper proportion of pasture, meadow and field. The larger streams flow through broad valleys of rich bottom lands, and are bordered by fine groves of timber. They abound in fish, furnish valuable water powers, and delightful scenery. But the most striking topographical feature of



Lyon County is our grand prairie. Here there is a vastness, a beauty and sublimity that no pen can describe. From April to October there is one vast sea of green, varied in hue with myraids of wild flowers. Away as far as the eye can reach, stretches a boundless expanse of rolling prairie, till fading imperceptibly into the distant horizon. The esthetic beholder is lost in wonder and admiration, and mourns that there is no hand to transform these green slopes and rich valleys into productive farms and happy homes.

### SOIL AND PRODUCTIONS.

The first inquiry of the intelligent pioneer regarding any particular locality will be, "What are its climate and soil?" and we are aware that upon climatic conditions, as well as composition of soil, depends not only the producing capacity of a country, but the character and prosperity of its inhabitants. But the former will be considered further on.

The soil is generally a drift deposit, covered with a black sandy loam and vegetable mold, from two to four feet deep, but, in the valleys, partakes more of an alluvial character, and is frequently ten feet thick, with a gravelly subsoil. Formed largely from the decay of the vegetation which has flourished on these prairies for unnumbered years, the soil is exceedingly rich and is easily cultivated. We would not have it inferred that there is sufficient sand to, in the least, impair its fertility, but, in fact, there is just enough to give it warmth and mellowness. We quote from the report of Dr. C. A. White, State Geologist, vol. 2, p. 204, where, in treating of our soil, he says:

"This fortunate admixture of soil-materials give a warmth and mellowness to the soil which is so favorable to the growth of crops, that they are usually matured, even in the northern part of this region, as early as they are upon the more clayey soils of the southern part of the State, although the latter are two hundred miles further southward. Such a soil has also the additional advantage of becoming sufficiently dry to cultivate sooner after the frosts of early spring have ceased, or the rain showers of summer have ended, than those do which contain a greater proportion of clay."

Besides these excellencies in our soil is the important one of its remarkable capacity for enduring severe drought. This is to be attributed not only to the looseness and depth of the soil, but to the nature of the sub-soil which under-



lies it. This is a clayey loam from sixty to two hundred feet thick, and is very porous, allowing the moisture to work up through it from an indefinite depth. Thus, during the great drought of 1870, which extended throughout the whole West, while in Kansas there was an almost total failure of crops and pasturage, and large numbers were leaving the State, in Lyon County what farms were then under cultivation produced abundantly, and the county was clothed in luxurious verdure.

Whatever inducements Lyon County may offer to the manufacturer, the merchant, or those engaged in the various pursuits of life, the essential fact remains that in our soil there lies a sure foundation for future wealth and greatness. Here alone is there not only the source of abundant material wealth, but the capitalist, foreseeing what the future is to bring forth when the hundreds of thousands of our unplowed acres are brought under cultivation, will not hesitate to invest his treasure in the various enterprises necessary to our growth and prosperity. And the husbandman has reason for his faith in a soil which never fails to reward him generously for the labor bestowed in its cultivation. But we shall speak of some of the staple productions of our agriculture, beginning with

#### WHEAT.

We doubt if any where since being transported from its native plains in Central Asia, has this great cereal found a more congenial soil and climate than in Northwestern Iowa and Lyon County. The great essentials to successful wheat-growing, a rare atmosphere with a soil rich in lime materials, here exists in the most favorable conditions. The variety principally grown is that known as spring wheat, which is sown as soon as frost disappears in spring, and is harvested in July. Its growth is heavy, the straw strong and berry plump. During the four years of its cultivation in Lyon County, it has never been affected by any disease whatever. With regard to yield, good judges place the average of the whole crop in the county, the present season, at from twenty-five to thirty bushels per acre, and many fields at thirty-five to forty bushels per acre. These estimates will appear like exaggerations in many portions of the East, but we believe they will not vary much from the actual yield. It is true that the present year is unusually favorable, but the crop has never fallen



below twenty-two bushels, and it is safe to calculate the average yield at twenty bushels per acre, or over.

The land is broken in May and June, and the next spring is ready for sowing without being plowed. Sowing, reaping, raking and threshing are all done by machinery, there being no hills, stumps, rocks, or other impediments to its use.

It may be objected that the long transportation which it must bear will seriously reduce the profits of its growth, but we believe that its easier production, certain and greater yield than in the East, much more than overbalance the greater cost of its transportation. Beside the increasing demand for breadstuffs in the mining countries to the West, we have a choice between the Chicago and Duluth wheat markets. Adding to these advantages the fact that it always finds ready market and sells for cash, it is believed that the growing of wheat in Lyon County is one of the most favorable opportunities now presenting itself to the agriculturalist. Some idea of the importance which it will assume in the future may be gathered from the fact that if one-fourth of the tillable land in Lyon County was sown to wheat, yielding fifteen bushels per acre, low estimates, a single crop would amount to 1,380,000 bushels.

#### CORN.

There is an impression prevailing to a considerable extent that this cereal cannot be raised with success in Northwestern Iowa, owing to coldness of the climate. This opinion has no foundation, as will be shown in our article on climate. Actual experience and statistics show that the mean summer heat of this region of the Missouri slope is equal to that required for the successful growth of corn. With a congenial climate and a warm soil, rich in nitrogen, it is one of our most certain and valuable productions. Mr. L. F. Knight has cultivated corn on his farm at the forks of Rock River since 1869, and has never failed to secure a good crop, and it has never been cut off by drought, frost or blight, yielding, in some years, as high as eighty bushels of shelled corn to the acre.

With good management, the yield is from fifty to eighty bushels per acre. This crop, as well as all others, is raised with less than half the labor usually required on the worn-out soils, or among the stumps and stones, with which the Eastern farmer has to contend. A man and a boy can tend





forty acres, besides devoting a portion of their time to other crops, the hoe hardly ever being used. This, with a yield of from forty to sixty bushels to the acre, would give all the way from 1,600 to 2,400 bushels of grain, which will give some idea of our facilities for stock and pork raising. If one-fourth of the area of Lyon County was planted to corn, producing forty bushels to the acre, the yield of one crop would be 3,680,000 bushels.

#### OTHER GRAINS.

Oats flourish remarkably, the yield having, in several instances, been as high as ninety bushels per acre, but from forty to sixty bushels is the common yield. Barley, rye and buckwheat have, as yet, received but little attention, but, where cultivated, have equalled the highest expectations, and will, no doubt, become favorite productions.

#### SORGHUM.

Our warm, rich soil is well adapted to the growth of sorghum and imphee, and our dry and sunny autumns are most favorable to its ripening and manufacture. The citizens of Lyon County have already given considerable attention to the cultivation of these plants, with excellent success, and their growth will no doubt become a permanent branch of our agriculture.

#### POTATOES.

This esculent, without which the table of the king or the peasant is incomplete, here flourishes in its highest perfection. It is nothing uncommon, with careful cultivation, especially on our alluvial bottom lands, to raise as high as three hundred bushels per acre. They are of superior size and flavor, and the crop is becoming one of great importance.

#### OTHER PLANTS.

This region seems peculiarly adapted, especially the alluvial soil of the valleys of the streams, to the raising of melons, squashes, tomatoes, beans, peas, cabbage, turnips, beets, and all the bulbous and salad plants. If the exact weight and measurement of cabbage, turnips, onions, etc., grown in Lyon County the present season, were given, not one in ten in many portions of the country would believe it to be true. In short, it may be said that nowhere is the soil more easily cultivated, or more certain to yield an ample reward for the labor bestowed upon it, than in Northwest Iowa and Lyon County.



## CLIMATE AND HEALTH.

Our great altitude—1400 feet above the sea level—and perfect drainage system, give a dry, pure and invigorating atmosphere, and forever settle all question regarding the healthfulness of our climate. Every person who contemplates immigration to the West, should give this subject his first and most earnest consideration.

Here they will be spared the malarious diseases which have attended the settlement of many of the western States, and which are still the scourge of the finest regions in the Southwest. A case of fever and ague was never known in Lyon County, and the whole country is absolutely free from diseases of a miasmatic origin. This rarity of atmosphere has also a highly beneficial effect upon those suffering from pulmonary complaints, and it is confidently believed that these diseases, incident to the more damp atmosphere of the New England States can never arise in this country.

Dr. J. W. Foster, in his great work, "The Mississippi Valley," says: "As we trace the isotherms of spring and summer, say from New York as a geographical point, they are found to pursue a pretty uniform direction westerly until they reach the western shore of Lake Michigan, when they abruptly curve to the northwest." Without entering upon a discussion of the laws of climatology to account for this phenomena, we will state that the truth of these observations is unanimously attested by the inhabitants of the great Valley of the Missouri. While our latitude is that of Central New York, we have a far more salubrious climate. The summers are warm, but are not hot and sultry, owing to the pleasant breezes which invariably spring up on the prairies in the forenoon, and continue through the day.

During the winter, rainfall is almost unknown, and, although the winters are cold, the air is so dry and bracing that their severity is not felt as in the humid regions of the East, or changeable climate of a more southern latitude.

But the crowning beauty of our climate is autumn. The delightful season known as "Indian summer" is here often prolonged into December, and is peculiarly charming. A calm, soft, hazy atmosphere fills the sky, through which, day after day, the sun, shorn of his beams, rises and sets like a globe of fire. By night the heavens are lighted by the burning prairies, the forests are tinged with the most gorgeous hues, and all Nature seems to wear the enchantments



of fairy land. Almost imperceptibly these golden days merge into winter; and so the seasons pass, year after year.

### RIVERS.

We have not claimed a better soil than that of adjoining counties, but in the number and character of its streams, and facilities for water power, Lyon County surpasses any portion of Northwestern Iowa.

The county is drained by the Rock and Big Sioux rivers and their tributaries.

#### THE ROCK RIVER

And its numerous affluents drain the central and eastern portions of the county. This stream takes its name from a bold outcrop of the red quartzite rock, called the "Blue Mounds," near the town of Luverne, Minnesota, from which the Yanktons gave it the name of "River of the Red Rock." It rises in Minnesota, about seventy-five miles north of the State line, and flows southward, passing nearly through the center of Lyon County, and unites with the Big Sioux about fifteen miles below its southern boundary. Its length is about one hundred miles, and it drains over a million acres of farming lands.

It is a clear, rapid and powerful stream, with a rocky or gravel bed, and an average width of from eighty to one hundred feet, and a depth of from three to six feet. It flows through a beautiful valley from one to three miles wide, the sides of which blend gracefully with the prairie beyond. Between the line of highest overflow and the prairie there stretches a continued level plane, which will serve the excellent purpose of a bed for a railroad—which must follow the development of this rich valley.

Aside from the many other advantages of this river, are the facilities which it affords for milling and manufacturing purposes, in its magnificent water powers. Those in Lyon County are among the finest in the Northwest, and are the source of great future wealth, and deserve the early attention of capitalists.

The scenery on this stream, especially in the summer, is most delightful. The beholder, at each sweeping bend of the river, is startled by a prospect of groves, parks, waterfalls and green slopes. The view in the distance is lost in the dim outline of the winging forest, or in other places is arrested by the cultivated field, the farm-house, or the thriving village.



The principal tributaries of the Rock are the Little Rock, Otter Creek, West Branch, Kanaranzi and Tom Creek. These are swift and sparkling streams, fed by springs. They rise in Minnesota, and in winding their way to a junction with the Rock, completely water all parts of the county.

#### THE BIG SIOUX RIVER

Received its name from Lewis and Clark, who passed its mouth on the 21st of August, 1804, on their great exploring expedition to the Northwest. These explorers reported it as a navigable stream, but this has not proved to be true, though steamboats have at times ascended the river some distance. This stream is somewhat larger than the Rock, and partakes of the same general description. It rises near Big Stone Lake, Dakota, and flows southward, dividing Lyon County from Dakota Territory, and emptying into the Missouri a short distance above Sioux City.

The valley of the Sioux is very extensive and fertile, being from three to six miles wide. On the Iowa side this valley is guarded by a line of bluffs from one hundred to two hundred and fifty feet high, which render the scenery picturesque and beautiful.

The facilities for manufacturing on this stream are excellent.

Good judges estimate that a fine water power may be found as often as once every two miles throughout its entire length, from the northwest corner of the State to the mouth of Rock River. With these advantages, the building of a railroad up this valley—already begun—and our fine field for sheep raising, the development of woolen manufacture promises much for the future of this country.

The streams in Lyon County all abound with many excellent varieties of fish, which are taken at all seasons of the year. Their valleys are inhabited by elk, deer, beaver, otter and other game, and by flocks of wild geese, ducks, pelicans, swans and other wild fowl, furnishing a fine opportunity for sporting.

#### STOCK RAISING.

The foregoing description of the water system of Lyon County cannot fail to show that this is preeminently an inviting field for stock raising. The wild blue-joint grass of our valleys forms the finest meadows in the world. It grows from three to six feet high, yielding from two to three





tons of hay per acre equal in value to that of the tame grasses. This is secured with machinery at small expense to the stock raiser. The grasses of the prairies are nutritious, and the range of pasturage is unlimited.

We cannot represent that "stock flourishes the year around upon the natural grasses without shelter, hay or other feed," for this is not true. Stock is turned into the uncut stalks of the corn fields in the fall, where they subsist until winter. The feeding season generally lasts about sixteen weeks, and stock is brought out in good condition with shelter and hay only.

It is a mistaken idea that stock raising may be carried on successfully without feed anywhere in the West. This is not attempted in but limited portions of the United States east of the Rocky mountains, and is attended with difficulty and frequently with great loss. Statistics, or reflection alone, will convince any person that the principal and most profitable stock raising is carried on in the northern States where winter feeding is necessary.

The raising of cattle, horses and sheep is here a safe and profitable business, and we advise immigrants, when convenient, to bring stock, the more the better.

### TIMBER—FOREST AND FRUIT CULTURE.

Most of us were born in a wooded country. In childhood we were accustomed to look out upon a landscape diversified by forest, mountain and valley. Transported to a region whose features are so different, with a surface stretching out in vast plains covered with a rich growth of vegetable green, either level or undulating like the waves of the sea, where the only timber to be seen is a long line of trees bordering a stream; transferred to such a scene, we are utterly confounded, so foreign is it to all our early associations. But the rapid development of the western prairies prove that the prejudice against this scarcity of timber is without foundation. To subdue a heavily timbered country and bring it under cultivation is a herculean undertaking, and requires the labor of a generation. A far greater area has been subdued upon the prairies of the West, producing ample supplies of human food, and sustaining a larger population, within the memory of men yet living, than on the Atlantic slope in over two centuries.

We are connected by rail with the extensive pine forests of Minnesota, and the price of lumber or expense of



building and fencing here is not greater than in Northern Illinois, Indiana or Ohio. For the present, fencing is almost entirely dispensed with, as stock is herded upon the vast tracts of vacant land.

The Rock and Sioux Rivers are bordered by fine groves of timber. The principal varieties are white maple, cottonwood, white ash, willow, elm and black walnut, and the supply is sufficient to last, for fuel and other purposes, until increased by the growth of artificial timber. Our farmers find that the time required in preparing and hauling wood may be more profitably employed in other labor; that our Iowa coal, which is delivered at the railroad stations at five to six dollars per ton, is a far better and cheaper fuel than wood.

The rapid growth of artificial timber on our prairie soil is astonishing. A grove of cottonwood or white maple of three or four years' growth is large enough for a shade or a wind-break. At six years it may be thinned out for fuel, and from that time on the tree grower may have an abundant supply of fuel and fencing material. The citizens of Lyon County are giving much attention to forest culture. During the past season they have planted millions of cottonwood, white maple, black walnut, ash, larch and box elder trees. In this manner a supply of timber is rendered certain for the future, the fierce blasts of winter are stayed, farms are rendered more valuable, and the country is adorned and beautified.

Fruit culture has not yet been sufficiently tested in Lyon County to enable us to give many results; but there is no doubt that all varieties usual to this latitude may be successfully cultivated. Such hardy varieties of apples as the Duchess of Oldenburg, Utter's Large, Tetofski, Red Astrachan, Fameuse, Northern Spy, Golden Russett, Siberian and all the small fruits, have been grown with perfect success for two years.

The wild fruit of our valleys, among which are many varieties of grapes, plums and strawberries, are delicious and abundant.

The immigrant from the East need not fear that he is bidding good-bye forever to those fruits that have been a comfort and a luxury in his former home.

#### STONE.

There is no stone on the prairies in Lyon County. A



farm of a thousand acres may be cultivated without so much as once touching a stone with the plow or the hoe. Plenty of boulders suitable for the walling of wells, cellars and eisterns are found along the banks of the Rock, Little Rock, and Big Sioux rivers. Lime stone is found on the Sioux, and is there converted into excellent lime in large quantities.

But in our great quarries of quartzite rock, lies buried our principal wealth in stone. These are situated at the extreme northwest corner of the State, and crop out at a number of places, over an area of about two square miles. The largest exposure occupies a space of about two acres, and extends into the Sioux river at the State corner, causing a fine fall and water power at that point. This is a hard, stratified rock of a beautiful reddish color. The State Geologist, who visited these quarries in 1868, gives it the name of "Sioux Quartzite," and ascribes its formation to the Azoic age. He states that it is the only out-crop of this rock in the State, and pronounces it "*absolutely indestructible.*"

This rock at present is rendered practically useless, owing to want of transportation, but we look forward to the time when it will enter into the construction of works of art, and enduring homes for the people of Lyon County.

### RAILROADS AND MARKETS.

No railroads are now in operation within the limits of Lyon County, but we are deriving all their substantial benefits from the Sioux City and St. Paul Road, which runs along our eastern boundary. Other lines are also being pushed rapidly forward, and will cross the county both north and south, east and west.

The Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad is one of the most important lines now being operated in Iowa. It connects us directly with the pineries of Minnesota and Wisconsin, the coal fields of Iowa, and with Duluth and Chicago.

The McGregor and Missouri River Railroad, now completed to Algona, is being rapidly extended westward to Dakota Territory, and is expected to run entirely across the county from east to west. By this road the great advantages of the Milwaukee wheat market, and a direct connection with the East, will be secured to our people.

The Iowa and Dakota Railroad, also, will probably pass through a portion of the county in a westerly direction. A tax to aid in its construction has been voted in Lyon and



other counties, and we are informed that its building will be commenced early in the coming season. This road will connect us directly with the Iowa coal mines, and will be of the greatest benefit to Northwestern Iowa.

The Sioux City and Pembina Railroad has its southern terminus at Sioux City. It follows up the valley of the Big Sioux along our western border, crosses the great continental watershed to the Red River of the North, and connects with the Northern Pacific Railroad at Brainard. The building of this road has been commenced, and when completed it will open up one of the finest valleys in the West, and secure us the advantages of the now important markets of the western mining regions.

The projected Rock River Railway will follow up the valley of the Rock through Lyon and Sioux Counties, Iowa, and Rock County, Minnesota. The route for this road is one of the most feasible ever proposed, and its construction as certain as the development of this extensive valley.

These roads are not imaginary; one has been completed, two are under construction, and the others are questions of time only.

Important as is production, the progress of an inland country will be measured by its railroad facilities.

The railroad is the power that is transforming the wilds of the great West into the most productive portion of the earth, and is revolutionizing the commerce of the world. The intelligent pioneer now asks of a locality, "How far is it from the railroad?" with even more interest than "What is its soil?" We invite attention to our railway prospects.

#### POPULATION AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES.

The present population of Lyon County numbers about 1,500, the greater portion of whom are former residents of Illinois and Wisconsin, with a share from the eastern States. A colony of Norwegians are located on the Sioux, who find our sunny slopes and fertile valleys far more congenial than the gloomy pines and lofty mountains of Norway. A number of Germans have settled in different portions of the county, and are among our most prosperous farmers.

The society of Friends have a fine settlement in the southeast corner of the county. They hold out, we believe, more pleasing and substantial inducements to their brethren who may desire to settle in a new country, than are offered elsewhere in the West.





As a whole, our citizens are intelligent, generous and enterprising, and we doubt if a happier people may be anywhere found. The early settlers of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin now look back upon the day when they were pioneers as the happiest period in their lives. So it is here. Gladly do we journey a dozen miles to raise the log cabin of a settler, or to join in a social gathering.

Our people take an active interest in the advancement of agriculture, manufactures, education, the growth of our towns and villages, and above all the settlement of the country. Those who come among us to find homes or engage in business pursuits will be greeted with a hearty welcome, aid and encouragement.

A county agricultural society has been organized which will hold its first fair during the present fall.

Several christian societies have been organized, and measures are being taken for the erection of churches.

The orders of Free Masons and Odd Fellows are represented among our citizens, and their early organization is proposed.

Our early settlers foresaw danger in the neglect of education. To guard against the evils of materiality they have adopted the common school system which has so long vitalized the eastern states, and which has followed the pioneer as inseparably as his shadow.

Seventeen school buildings, costing from one to three thousand dollars each, and provided with all the modern conveniences, have already been built in Lyon county. Not only are the common branches taught, but, wherever numbers will admit, graded schools may be established. Our public school system is closely connected with the State University and the many colleges in Iowa, and our educational advantages are not surpassed in the older states.

The revenue for the support of these schools is ample. First, there is section sixteen in every township granted by the general government for school purposes. This grant in Lyon county amounts to 11,520 acres of choice lands which will be sold to actual settlers, for the support of schools. To this may be added the interest annually received from the permanent State School Fund—now amounting to over four millions of dollars—and revenue from taxation. The large quantities of non-resident and railroad lands in the county may be taxed for school purposes and internal im-



provements. The latter gives an advantage over localities where the lands are largely in the hands of government and are non-taxable.

### TOWNS AND MANUFACTURING FACILITIES.

Considering the fact that all our towns are less than two years old, we evidently can give but a description of those resources and conditions which promise future municipal growth and prosperity. In so doing we follow the order in which improvements began on the sites of our several towns.

#### BELOIT

is situated in the extreme southwest corner of the county, on a smooth plain which rises gradually from the east bank of the Sioux river. The town has a charming location—on the south, the river bends abruptly to the east, and the high bluffs on either side loom up in a thousand weird and fantastic forms; to the north and west the view takes in beautiful groves of maple and elm, the wide valley of the Sioux and the rolling prairies of Dakota.

In natural resources, advantages of location, present improvements and future prospects, Beloit surpasses any town in the extensive and fertile valley of the Sioux. It is the commercial and manufacturing center of a large and productive region, and now does a flourishing business.

The town is connected by daily and tri-weekly mail and stage lines with Doon, Sheldon, Lemars, and Sioux City, Iowa, and Yankton, Vermillion, Canton and Sioux Falls, Dakota. The Sioux City and Pembina and Iowa and Dakota railroads are both expected to strike Beloit. The former is now under construction and the company has secured grounds near the town plat for a depot. There are also excellent water privileges near by which are beginning to be improved.

Beloit now contains one flouring mill, a fine structure, 34 x 44, four stories high, with a grinding capacity of forty bushels per hour. It has also a grain elevator, saw mills, several real estate offices, stores, shops, an hotel, public hall fine school building, and some twenty residences.

The following are the leading business firms:

J. A. Carpenter & Sons, proprietors of the Beloit saw and flouring mills, and dealers in lands and town property.

Goetz & Thorson, real estate and tax paying agents and examiners of titles.

Keep & Carpenter, dealers in general merchandise.



H. T. Helgersen, dealer in agricultural implements, lands and town property, and proprietor of the Lyon county nursery.

M. Nelson, dealer in hardware, stoves and tinware.

K. Gesley, saddlery and harness making.

The Lyon county nurseries contain 20,000 apple trees hardy varieties selected especially for this climate; 5,000 evergreen and ornamental trees, over 200,000 silver maple, larch and other varieties, adapted to forest culture; also a full stock of small fruits.

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The farm of J. A. Carpenter & Sons, near town, is worthy of mention as showing how farming may be carried on in the west. It contains over 5,000 acres, 1,600 of which are now under cultivation, and 2,000 acres more will be put under the plow the coming season.

Over 40,000 acres of farming lands surrounding Beloit are for sale to settlers upon easy terms. Town property is held at merely nominal prices, and every inducement is offered by one of the most promising towns in the Northwest.

Information concerning Beloit and surrounding country will be cheerfully given by addressing any of its business firms

#### DOON

is situated upon a smooth plateau on the east bank of the Rock, at the confluence of the West Branch, Rock and Little Rock rivers. It commands a view of the valleys of these streams, whose sweeping bends, shady groves, and sparkling waters, present a beautiful landscape as far as the eye can reach. Here fancy would again restore to us some eastern village, surrounded by orchards, meadows and farms, were it not for that enterprise so characteristic of rising towns in the West.

Its geographical situation is very nearly at the middle of the county east and west, and one mile and a half from its southern boundary. It is located on the line of the Rock Valley Railway, and will also be the crossing of the Iowa and Dakota Railroad.

Doon has been amply provided by nature with the foundation for a substantial and flourishing town.

The country drained by the several streams that unite at this place is tributary to Doon. Two of the finest water powers on Rock River are conveniently located. The water has cut out an almost perfect mill race, the banks of the



stream are solid, and the power can be utilized at little expense. Timber and stone are also plenty and convenient.

With the improvement of these advantages for manufacture, the development of the surrounding country, and completion of railroads, Doon will rank as one of our finest western towns. For the purpose of encouraging these objects some of our leading business men have organized "The Lyon County Town Lot and Real Estate Company." The objects of this Company are to deal in real estate, and in particular to invite immigration, encourage manufacturers, and promote the growth of Doon.

The town has already made rapid progress. Tri-weekly mail stages connect it with Sheldon and Sibley, on the St. Paul railroad, and with Rock Rapids, Beloit and Lemars. A lively newspaper, Republican in politics, is also published at Doon. The first paper ever printed in Lyon county was issued from this office, Sept. 20th, 1872. It also contains a good hotel, several real estate offices and stores, a public hall and an elegant school building. Other buildings are going up and steps are being taken to erect a church. The Rock river is being spanned near town with an iron bridge. At present a flouring mill is urgently needed; other manufactures must follow. More than 50,000 acres of our best farming lands are held for sale at Doon. The home-seeker and the capitalist are urged to investigate the inducements which are here offered, either by visit or correspondence with any of the following firms:

The Lyon County Town Lot and Real Estate Company, A. J. Warrea, President; H. D. Rice, Vice President; James H. Wagner, Treasurer; Charles E. Goetz, Secretary.

M. W. Jeffries, dealer in general merchandise and agricultural implements.

The Lyon County Press, L. B. Raymond & Co., editors and proprietors.

James H. Wagner, real estate, tax paying and collection Agent.

G. R. Badgerow, real estate and tax paying agent.

Geo. W. McQueen, dealer in real estate.

S. C. Hyde, real estate agent and surveyor.

#### ROCK RAPIDS.

Among the many Northwestern towns that have sprung into existence within the last two years, none have shown





more life and vigor than Rock Rapids, and none now offer superior inducements to capitalists or immigrants.

Located upon a beautiful table land at the junction of the Rock and Kanaranzi rivers, abounding in foliage from stately trees to tiny flowers, and within the sound of water falls it is, indeed, a lovely town.

Geographically it is situated very near the middle of the county east and west, and five miles from its northern boundary. It is also located on the line of the Rock Valley Railway, and will be the crossing of the Rock Rapids and Sioux Falls Division of the McGregor and Missouri River Railroad. Tri-weekly mail and stage lines also connect the town with Sibley, on the St. Paul Railway, with Doon, Lemars and Larchwood, Iowa, Luvern, Minnesota, and Sioux Falls, Dakota.

An extensive region of country, embracing the northern part of Lyon County and a large district in Minnesota, is its natural tributary. But a surer foundation for the future greatness and permanence of Rock Rapids, stronger than all local advantages, are its exhaustless manufacturing facilities. Three first-class water powers are situated within one mile of the town. Their power is ample for milling and manufacturing purposes. The banks of the stream and building sites are safe and substantial. An abundance of rock for the construction of dams lies loose in the bed of the stream where it is needed for use.

Rock Rapids contains a good hotel, several real estate offices, stores, shops, a newspaper, public hall and a fine school building. A church has been organized, and steps are being taken to erect a house of worship. Other buildings are also under construction, and an iron bridge is now being stretched across the Rock River opposite the town.

Many of the buildings are fine structures. The residence of C. H. Moon, the finest in the country, does credit to so young a town. A visit to the garden of J. S. Smith, filled with plants, flowers and shrubbery of all kinds, would show what may be accomplished in horticulture on our western soil. The grounds surrounding the residence of J. S. Howell, near town, would do credit to one of our eastern cities. They are regularly and tastefully laid out, with walks, drives, orchards and groves, the latter containing over 20,000 trees of many rare varieties.

A large nursery is being planted near town, which will



be able to supply the whole valley with all kinds of fruit and forest trees.

The different real estate firms of Rock Rapids are agents for the sale of more than 50,000 acres of adjoining farming lands, for all of which settlers are earnestly desired. A flouring mill is also urgently demanded and would richly repay the investment. With the development of the surrounding country other manufactures must spring up and Rock Rapids take an importance far beyond what its most hopeful citizens ever anticipated.

We invite an examination of the town and surrounding country or correspondence with any of the following named parties:

The Rock Rapids Water Power Improvement, Milling and Manufacturing Company; J. S. Howell, president; C. H. Moon, vice-president; O. A. Cheney, secretary; D. C. Whitehead, superintendent; T. K. Bradley, treasurer; J. F. Eccleston, attorney.

Van Sickle Brothers, dealers in general merchandise and agricultural implements.

T. K. Bradley, dealer in general merchandise.

D. C. Whitehead, attorney at law and real estate agent.

J. S. Howell, real estate broker and notary public.

Mount Brothers, real estate, title and insurance agents.

Smith & Monlux, dealers in agricultural implements.

The Rock Rapids *Review*, O. A. Cheney editor and proprietor.

J. F. Eccleston, attorney at law.

Ethan Allen, real estate agent and surveyor.

Rock Rapids Hotel, T. E. Convers, proprietor.

Rock River Nurseries, D. E. Sweet, proprietor.

#### LARCHWOOD

is situated in the northwestern part of the county, surrounded by some of our best farming lands. The place has a handsome location, on the Rock Rapids and Sioux Falls stage line, and expects to receive the McGregor railroad. It is now the central point for a colony from Illinois, which is changing this portion of the county from a wilderness to a fine farming district. One of the principal advantages offered at Larchwood is improved farms with artificial timber for settlers. The surrounding vacant lands are owned by J. W. Fell, of Bloomington, Ill., who is taking every pains to prepare them for settlement. Ten acres are broken on



each quarter section and planted to timber—principally European larch. The new comer may thus find lands ready for cultivation the first year and a grove of timber growing. These lands are among the best in the county and the colony is prosperous. For further information address J. W. Fell, Bloomington, Ill., or J. F. Geiser, real estate agent. Larchwood, Lyon county, Iowa.

## THE COUNTY SEAT

of Lyon has not yet been established, but the legal steps are now being taken for its location.

## PRICES OF LAND.

There is room enough in Lyon county for 1,500 families with 160 acres of land each, which may be bought for \$5.00 per acre. The best lands in the county are offered at \$5.00 much at \$4.00, and we know of none for which more than \$6.00 per acre is asked. Thousands in Northwestern Iowa are paying for these lands from the proceeds of the soil alone. The new-comer arrives in the spring, which is the best time, puts up a temporary cabin and breaks up forty or fifty acres the first season, there being none of that laborious process of removing trees, stumps and stones. A part of this land may be planted to "sod corn" the first year, yielding a good crop. He then finds time to cut hay and prepare for winter. The next season this land is ready for wheat, and from this time on he finds no difficulty in making his annual payments from the proceeds of this crop alone. A large share of our vacant lands are held by railroad companies, which offer it upon long time and easy terms. Look at the payments upon the usual plan :

160 acres, at \$5 per acre, cost .....	\$800	
Paid at time of purchase.....	80	
One year's interest on balance .....	\$50 40	
End of first year .....	44 80	80
End of second year.....	39 20	80
End of third year ....	33 60	80
End of fourth year.....	28 00	80
End of fifth year.....	22 40	80
End of sixth year .....	17 80	80
End of seventh year...	11 20	80
End of eighth year.....	5 60	80
End of ninth year .....		80

\$252 00 \$800

Never, do we believe, were landless men offered such an opportunity to secure homes.



## CONCLUSION.

"Westward the star of empire takes its way." Five years ago the land we occupy was a howling wilderness. Vast herds of buffalo roamed over our prairies, or came thundering down our green slopes, where the husbandman's flocks now graze in quiet. The huts of savages marked the sites of our flourishing villages. The aged man of New England can recollect when central New York constituted the west. Following down the aisles of time he will recall the period when the few enterprising men who decided to emigrate to the "far west," collected their household goods hitched their ox teams to their wagons, and started on a two months journey to Ohio. Their friends crowded around them to speak their sad farewells, little expecting they would ever be able to return. To-day, although a thousand miles further west, we are yet east of the middle of the United States, and still the course is west. We can take the railroad almost at our doors, and in three days reach the Atlantic or Pacific coast. Flourishing communities, cities, territories and powerful states have been established, among which the noble state of Iowa occupies a proud position.

Blessed with favorable climate, personal liberty and energy protected and encouraged by equal laws, great strides have been made in agriculture, commerce, art, science and learning. Thousands of poor men from the Old World and the New, have followed this march of progress up the rugged valley of pioneer life, to fortune and independence. Hundreds of thousands of young men have here begun life and grown up with the country, sharing its wealth and prosperity. And yet there is room for millions more with opportunities equal to those who have preceded them. In the region which it is hoped this little pamphlet will describe are hundreds of thousands of acres of rich lands, as fresh as when first from the hands of nature, whose surface has never been furrowed by the plow. This must be made to contribute to the sustenance of man. Our water-powers are to be made useful; our railroad system is to be developed; our institutions are to be founded and our history shaped. Who will join us in this noble work and share the blessings which it will confer?

"I hear the tread of pioneers of nations yet to be—

The first low wash of waves, where soon shall roll a human sea,  
The rudiments of empire here are plastic yet, and warm,  
The chaos of a mighty world is rounding into form."

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF  
LYON COUNTY, IOWA

BY  
S. C. HYDE, 1873

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